

**PINELLAS COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY**  
**Emergency Transfer Plan for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence,**  
**Sexual Assault, or Stalking**  
**Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance Program**

**Emergency Transfers**

The Pinellas County Housing Authority (PCHA) is concerned about the safety of its tenants, and such concern extends to tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. In accordance with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA),<sup>1</sup> the PCHA allows tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to request an emergency transfer from the tenant's current unit to another unit. The ability to request a transfer is available regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.<sup>2</sup> The ability of the PCHA to honor such request for tenants currently receiving assistance, however, may depend upon a preliminary determination that the tenant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and on whether the PCHA has another dwelling unit that is available and is safe to offer the tenant for temporary or more permanent occupancy.

This plan identifies tenants who are eligible for an emergency transfer, the documentation needed to request an emergency transfer, confidentiality protections, how an emergency transfer may occur, and guidance to tenants on safety and security. This plan is based on a model emergency transfer plan published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the federal agency that oversees that the **Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance program** is in compliance with VAWA.

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the name of this law, VAWA protection is available to all victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

<sup>2</sup> Housing providers cannot discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic, including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, or age. HUD-assisted and HUD-insured housing must be made available to all otherwise eligible individuals regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

### **Eligibility for Emergency Transfers**

A tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, as provided in HUD's regulations at 24 CFR part 5, subpart L, is eligible for an emergency transfer, if the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant remains within the same unit. If the tenant is a victim of sexual assault, the tenant may also be eligible to transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises within the 90-calendar-day period preceding a request for an emergency transfer.

A tenant requesting an emergency transfer must expressly request the transfer in accordance with the procedures described in this plan.

Tenants who are not in good standing may still request an emergency transfer if they meet the eligibility requirements in this section.

### **Emergency Transfer Request Documentation**

To request an emergency transfer, the tenant shall notify the PCHA's management office and submit a written request for a transfer to either the PCHA central office or Norton Apartments leasing office, Attention: Asset Manager. The PCHA will provide reasonable accommodations to this policy for individuals with disabilities. The tenant's written request for an emergency transfer should include either:

1. A statement expressing that the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant were to remain in the same dwelling unit assisted under the PCHA's program; OR
2. A statement that the tenant was a sexual assault victim and that the sexual assault occurred on the premises during the 90-calendar-day period preceding the tenant's request for an emergency transfer.

The PCHA may allow for a verbal statement/self-certification in certain circumstances. While the PCHA may request in writing that the victim provide documentation of an occurrence of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, third-party documentation may not be required to qualify the tenant for an emergency transfer.

## **Confidentiality**

The PCHA will keep confidential any information that the tenant submits in requesting an emergency transfer, and information about the emergency transfer, unless the tenant gives the PCHA written permission to release the information on a time-limited basis, or disclosure of the information is required by law or required for use in an eviction proceeding or hearing regarding termination of assistance from the covered program. This includes keeping confidential the new location of the dwelling unit of the tenant, if one is provided, from the person or persons that committed an act of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking against the tenant. Any request for protection under VAWA will be kept in a file separate from the resident/unit file, and any requests made under VAWA will not be noted in the resident/unit file. Requests made under VAWA will not be notated in any shared database systems. See the Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence against Women Act for All Tenants for more information about the PCHA's responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of information related to incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

## **Emergency Transfer Timing and Availability**

The PCHA cannot guarantee that a transfer request will be approved or how long it will take to process a transfer request. The PCHA will, however, act as quickly as possible to move a tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to another unit, subject to availability and safety of a unit. If a tenant reasonably believes a proposed transfer would not be safe, the tenant may request a transfer to a different unit. If a unit is available, the transferred tenant must agree to abide by the terms and conditions that govern occupancy in the unit to which the tenant has been transferred. The PCHA may be unable to transfer a tenant to a particular unit if the tenant has not or cannot establish eligibility for that unit.

If the PCHA has no safe and available units for which a tenant who needs an emergency transfer is eligible, the PCHA will assist the tenant in identifying other housing providers who may have safe and available units to which the tenant could move. At the tenant's request, the PCHA will also assist tenants in contacting the local organizations offering assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking that are attached to this plan.

### **Emergency Transfers: PBRA Program**

If you are a resident and request an emergency transfer as described in this plan, the PCHA will attempt to assist you in moving to a safe unit quickly. The PCHA will make exceptions as required to policies restricting moves.

At your request, the PCHA will refer you to organizations that may be able to further assist you. You may also request an emergency transfer to the following programs for which you are required to apply for assistance:

- Public housing program
- HCV tenant-based program
- HCV project-based assistance
- Other programs administered by the PCHA

Emergency transfers will not take priority over waiting list admissions for these types of assistance. At your request, the PCHA will refer you to organizations that may be able to further assist you.

### **Internal and External Transfer Requests**

The tenant may request an internal transfer within the same single or scattered site property in which the tenant resides or may request an external move to move out of the property in which they reside. The victim may request both an internal transfer and an external move concurrently if an internal safe unit is not immediately available. The PCHA will make all reasonable efforts to assist tenants with requesting both internal transfers and external .

The PCHA will allow the tenant to make an internal transfer when a safe unit is not immediately available. The owner defines immediately available as a vacant unit, ready for move-in within a reasonable period of time based on local factors. The PCHA will ensure that requests for internal emergency transfers under VAWA are given the same priority already provided to other types of emergency transfer requests. The tenant will be offered the first available vacant unit ready for move-in in the same property or in another building that is part of the same scattered-site property in accordance with this plan. The victim will be allowed to assess the availability of the units and the suitability according to the individual circumstances of the household. If the first unit offered is not suitable due to these circumstances, the PCHA will continue to make every effort to provide an alternative unit as soon as one is available that meets the criteria for the household.

If an internal transfer is not viable, the PCHA will discuss transfer options for external moves with the victim in accordance with this plan.

An external move may be requested when a unit that meets the victim's safety standard is not available at the current property or is not immediately available. If an external move is required, the PCHA will, at a minimum, provide the victim with contact information for relevant local service providers, government agencies, and other affordable housing developments in the area.

Note that qualifying for an emergency transfer does not guarantee either continued assistance under the current program or an external move to another covered housing program. Emergency transfer requirements do not supersede any eligibility or occupancy requirements that may apply under a covered housing program. Tenants must still meet the eligibility criteria for the property to which they are moving.

### **Safety and Security of Tenants**

Pending processing of the transfer and the actual transfer, if it is approved and occurs, the tenant is urged to take all reasonable precautions to be safe.

Tenants who are or have been victims of domestic violence are encouraged to contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, or a local domestic violence shelter, for assistance in creating a safety plan. For persons with hearing impairments, that hotline can be accessed by calling 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

Tenants who have been victims of sexual assault may call the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network's National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE, or visit the online hotline at <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>.

Tenants who are or have been victims of stalking seeking help may visit the National Center for Victims of Crime's Stalking Resource Center at <https://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center>.

**Additional Local Organizations:**

The following local organizations offer assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

For help regarding sexual assault, you may contact 24 Hour Rape Crisis Hot Line at (727) 530-RAPE (7273) or the Abuse Hotline at (800) 962-2873.

Victims of stalking seeking help may contact Community Action Stops Abuse (CASA) 24/7

Hotline: (727) 895-4912, TTY/TDD: (727) 828-1269, 24/7 online chat:

[www.CASAPinellas.org/chat](http://www.CASAPinellas.org/chat) , Website: [www.casapinellas.org](http://www.casapinellas.org), Fax: (727) 821-7101, or Hope

Villages of America – The Haven 24/7 Hotline: (727) 442-4128, TTY/TTD: (727) 446-2148,

Fax: (727) 461-4702, Website: [hopevillagesofamerica.org](http://hopevillagesofamerica.org)